

Sept 7 – Worldview Recap: Who is Your Teacher?

Our world is egocentric. “Me-centric.”

What does our culture, our society promote? How I look, how I feel, what will be good for me. What can, should, and has been done for me. Consider how this mindset has influenced theological teaching, how we celebrate salvation, even some of the songs you’ll hear on “Christian” radio.

In this class we will continue examining several big examples of how worldly influence has crept into mainstream Christian circles, subverting God’s Word and actually enslaving people to false notions about who God is, what He expects, and what this life is all about. For those of you who missed last semester, I would highly encourage you join us on Wednesday evenings for our Q&A where we will cover that material in a discussion format.

Sanctification occurs as we reorient our thinking so that it becomes theocentric. “God-centered.” This is where true freedom is found, but it comes at a terrible cost. You might be asked to give over a faulty belief you have. You might be asked to consider God’s glory in the midst of profound pain and loss. You might be asked to confront your deepest fears and hurts. You might be asked to reorient your idea of justice, anger, forgiveness, and a host of others so that they more accurately reflect God’s Word rather than worldly wisdom.

- Luke 4:18-19 – Jesus came to open our eyes, to set us free
- Galatians 5:1 – Submitting to the yoke of slavery is subtle!!!!
- Colossians 1:28 – 2:8 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil... that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments... ⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.
- John 10:1-10 – Those who belong to Jesus, His sheep, will know His voice
- Romans 12:2 – Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

When was the last time you tested your mind to discern whether or not your behaviors, values, and beliefs aligned with the will of God? Whether or not your life reflects the pursuit of what God describes as good, acceptable, and perfect?

What is it about our minds that need renewal? To answer this, we need to recap how our worldview is formed. It begins with culture.

Definition of Culture & Worldview

- Culture
 - a people's way of life
 - their design for living
 - their way of coping with their biological, physical, and social environment
 - The "power" that keeps people following their cultural script is something inside of people – the power of habit (hear that as the power of conformity). Culture has no power in and of itself. People regularly modify old customs and create new ones. The pressure to conform to these habits comes from the society, the people who ascribe to these normative habits.

Where does this begin?

- Worldview
 - not separate from culture but is included as the deepest level of presuppositions upon which people base their lives
 - a presupposition is something you take for granted as real or true
 - generally not questions you sit around and ponder in your free time (unless you have lots of free time like a philosopher or a pastor)
 - Who are you?
 - Where did you come from?
 - Is there anyone or anything else occupying reality?
 - Is all I see all there really is?
 - Is right now the only time that is important, or do events in the past, and the future, significantly impact my present experience?
 - Every culture assumes specific answers to these questions, and those answers control and integrate every function, aspect, and component of culture
 - the structured set of assumptions underlying how a people perceive and respond to reality
 - lens by which one assess and makes sense of the world

Remember that culture has layers...

- Behavior – what is done
- Values – what is good or best
- Beliefs – what is true
- Worldview – what is real

Can someone give me an example of something that would be considered Central's culture?

How does secular, worldly wisdom define reality? Materialism. Reality is exclusive to what can be measured and observed within the physical world, which means all problems must have material causes and all problems must have material solutions.

People don't exist in a vacuum, which means how we present the gospel and disciple can't be administered as though the person was formed in a vacuum. People are introduced to competing ways of understanding reality all the time and it does not change their beliefs. Why? Because it did not change their worldview. Millions of kids raised in Christian homes, approximately 3 in 4, raised in church, will go off into adulthood and be introduced to competing worldviews and subsequently adopt those worldviews and change their beliefs, values, and behaviors. Why? Because their faith wasn't foundational to their reality, only at the behavior level, perhaps even as deep as the values and beliefs level, but it did not shape reality.

I went to a missionary boarding school, so kids whose parents were career missionaries, and this statistics was just as true for them as it is anywhere else.

Millions of Christians feel "stuck" in their growth in holiness, confused as to why their behaviors haven't changed, haven't become more Christ-like, confused as to why they consistently choose what is worse in their life rather than what is best, confused as to why knowing the truth and living the truth aren't the same thing. Why? Because they are still conforming to secular thinking in parts of their worldview.

This boils down to a rather important biblical question: Who is your teacher?

Hear these words from **Luke 6:39-40**.

³⁹ He [Jesus] also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher."

Examining your worldview isn't just important or a good idea; it's essential. In verse 39, Jesus unambiguously declares that those who follow blind guides will fall into destruction. Just so we are clear, this is spiritual blindness. Two chapters earlier in the synagogue Jesus quotes the following from Isaiah:

Luke 4:18-19

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Jesus came to proclaim good news, to set people free, to open spiritual eyes, to liberate the spiritually oppressed. Another way of understanding this passage is that in Luke 4 Jesus declared war against Satan and his influence over this world. We are in the midst of that war still today.

Those who follow blind guides will fall into the pit as it says in Luke 6, into destruction. How do these blind guides lead?

Blind guides lead others by the traditions of man instead of the truth of God, leading to destruction.

Mark 7:6-8: And he [Jesus] said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁷ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ⁸ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

Their worship was in vain because it wasn’t in spirit, from the heart, and truth, meaning God-centered.

We are in big trouble if, when we are asked, “Why do you think or do things this certain way?” and we answer, “Because we’ve always thought or done things this way.”

Blind guides lead others by the trends of the world instead of the unchanging truth of Christ, leading to destruction.

Galatian 1:6-10: ⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Shifting trends are always an attempt to please man, that’s why we jump on the bandwagon. We don’t want to be left out. We don’t want to stand out. God’s word, this entire book, is the gospel, the Good News, God speaking to us across all time and space. And all of it points to Christ. Humanity’s greatest problem and the solution haven’t changed because God’s Word is unchanging. We Christians remain stuck when we don’t know how to properly handle this Word of Truth.

Blind guides lead others by worldly wisdom rather than biblical precepts, leading to destruction.

1 John 4:1-3: Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.

Don't confuse this passage as being about demons but rather the spirit of deception that exists in every human apart from the presence of the Holy Spirit. Yes, this will include demonic influences because Satan is the father of lies, but testing every spirit means testing every message, and messenger, in order to discern whether or not it is of the world or of God.

Why is this important? Verse 40 in Luke 6 warns **you will become like your teacher**. Don't be deceived into thinking this is about just a classroom setting. Your teachers are everywhere. The books you read, the TV you watch, the podcasts you listen to, the friends you have, the wisdom you pursue, the social media you consume. Whatever messages and messengers you are or have embraced in order to shape and makes sense of this reality, those are your teachers, and you are becoming like your teachers.

- **Whoever is teaching you is shaping your worldview, what you submit to by faith as real.**
- **Whoever is teaching you is shaping your beliefs, what you are convinced is true.**
- **Whoever is teaching you is shaping your values, what you embrace as good or shun as evil.**
- **Whoever is teaching you is shaping your behavior, how you respond to people and circumstances in this life.**

The greatest struggle for Christians desiring to mature in Christ isn't God's perceived distance at times but rather the secular worldview continuing to pollute our hearts and minds. The renewing of our minds, the taking captive every thought, is a divine mandate to self-reflect upon your worldview and ask:

Who is my teacher?

When you leave this room today, I want you to leave without a shred of ambiguity because there are only two options. **Two** choices. They've been there from the start, leading us all the way back to the garden. **You are either being taught by Satan or God.** You're either learning God's way or Satan's way. Last semester we talked about the two kingdoms. Remember the curses? God cursed the serpent, saying, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring." Satan is an angelic being, which means he can't have offspring. God is saying there will be constant conflict between God's people, God's kingdom, represented through Eve and her offspring, through the promised serpent-crusher, conflict between that kingdom and rebellious humanity and rebellious angels, Satan's kingdom, represented through Satan and his influence. That enmity will persist until Jesus returns and absolutely obliterate the remnants of Satan's kingdom.

Your worldview is either conforming to God's worldview or distorting to Satan's worldview. There is no neutral fence-setting according to Scripture. How do you know you are pursuing the right one?

James 4:4 spells this out clearly: You adulterous people (meaning you are cheating on God by continuing to flirt with the world, continuing to embrace what the world offers, continuing to conform to worldly thinking, worldly desires, worldly worldview)! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God (that's a direct reference back to Genesis 3:15)? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

We need to take this warning seriously.

Remember that our battle isn't against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Our battle is against the worldview message perpetuated in the world from Satan, his influence in the world perpetuated and shared by godless and misguided people. Here's a controversial statement: our battle isn't even against the remaining sin in our lives because Jesus has already taken the penalty on our behalf. Sin remains when we continue to conform to a distorted worldview instead of embracing the transformative work and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

We spend so much time in our battle against remaining sin, typically displayed as behavior, that we neglect the battle for our hearts and minds, the battle at the deepest level. Sin loses its power and appeal when our hearts and minds have been liberated and remain liberated! The blood of Christ does the liberating, but you have a part to play in remaining liberated. Stop returning to the yoke of slavery as Paul declares in Galatians 5:1. Our battle is embracing and experiencing the abundant freedom Christ came to bring, the rest He promises here and now, the liberation from the lies of Satan perpetuated in the world.

Everyone single one of us has been taught by Satan. His influence permeates every part of our culture, in our understanding of philosophy, theology, biology, psychology, ethics, sociology, law, politics, economics, history, etc.

Please understand, I'm a big fan of higher education. I believe the pursuit of knowledge is a worthy pursuit. There are countless theorists and professors who would make me look like a bumbling idiot on a vast majority of subjects, but let us never conflate intelligence with wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." ²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the

scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Of those areas I listed off where Satan has influenced our thinking (and there's a lot more, mind you), I can speak with intellectual and experiential confidence on just a few, but I can point with confidence to God's Word on all of them when it comes to worldview. I lived and breathed in the secular world of psychology and counseling for almost twenty years, both academically and professionally. I've been a case manager, a clinician doing 1:1 and group sessions, and a program coordinator teaching and managing shifting trends to those under my authority and care. Every couple of years we had to adapt our practice because of theory and methodology changes. I've worked with adults and juveniles in a variety of intervention settings, and have thousands of hours of counseling and training to my name.

All those years I was also a confessing follower of Jesus Christ, even in bi-vocational ministry towards the end, until God, in His infinite grace and wisdom, brought me to a situation where my worldview needed to be confronted with biblical truth. I was so thoroughly indoctrinated in subtle worldly thinking about what is real about God, evil, and humanity that renewing my mind was an enormous spiritual undertaking. It broke me until I was at last broken free and embraced the authority and sufficiency of God's Word. Then everything changed! **We don't worship the Bible; we worship who the Bible reveals.** But if we don't know, or heaven forbid don't trust what God has said about Himself and us, how else are we to know Him? How else are we to know ourselves? Who or what else is going to shape our reality?

If we had the time today, I could take us on a trip through the past three centuries to see how biblical thinking has been replaced by worldly thinking in our Western context. The post-Enlightenment era labeled anything faith-based as unintellectual. Academia, which had been dominated by biblical thought and study for centuries, rejected the unseen and adopted a materialistic worldview. Only the visible is real. Only what can be observed, measured, and experimented upon. For over a century and a half, Christians stopped pushing back and became passive and silent, retreating from mainstream academia, allowing secular, godless theories concerning the origin of man and the world to replace biblical truth, directly influencing how we answer the question, "What is real?" Well, when you remove God from your worldview, answering this question becomes impossibly convoluted and godless.

Imagine the absence of God in philosophy, theology (yes, that's possible), biology, psychology, ethics, etc. A godless worldview. Distorted. Corrupt.

Romans 1:18

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Adopting a biblical worldview means everything, every thought you have, every preconceived notion, everything you've blindly taken for granted as true and real as taught by worldly influences and, dare I say it, misguided Christians, all of it needs to be transformed by the Holy Spirit as you engage in the renewal of your mind based on His holy Word rather than the world.

I share last semester that I have a weakness for chocolate chip cookies. Pretend for a second you do, too. I could gather the finest cookie ingredients this world has to offer. The finest flour. The finest sugar and vanilla. The finest butter and chocolate chips. Premium. The absolute best. But while I'm mixing these fine ingredients together, let's say I drop in two little chunks of mouse poop. Teeny-tiny little mouse poops. So small. No biggie, right, just a little hantavirus? None of you, having watched me drop in the mouse poop, would sample one of these cookies when I bring them fresh from the oven no matter how good they looked, no matter how good they smelled.

Worldly wisdom, according to James 4, is demonic wisdom. It might look enticing. It might smell amazing. But the presence of those godless little nuggets disqualifies the entire cookie. Here's the weirdest sentence I will ever say: God's Word is those perfect, premium cookies absent the mouse poop. Feast on His Word! Who is training you to feast and understand His Word? That's kind of an important question.

In Galatians 5 Paul warns us that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. A little bit of toxic influence will spread and corrupt your worldview. It is with a biblical confidence that I point to godless worldly wisdom and reject what it has to say about philosophy, theology, and in particular psychology, the study of the soul, because worldly wisdom rejects, distorts, and replaces the Creator of the soul. I do this because I know, as revealed by God's Word, how this worldly influence corrupts and distorts and enslaves believers by rejecting the truth found in God's Word and replacing it with imprisoning falsehoods. The world desperately wants you to remain enslaved, to remain in darkness.

Here's a common trap. Let me take this secular human wisdom (and even some supposedly Christian wisdom, mind you) and see if I can find it in God's Word. Now, obviously the Bible isn't going to have the instructions for how to construct a combustion engine. It will, however, have the answer to worldview questions. So let me bring this human wisdom about worldview and see if I can find it, or an approximation, in the Bible. That's a trap because now we assume everything from this human source is now in God's Word.

Worse still, let's say we find a principle that's true from secular, worldly wisdom because it's also true in God's Word, but rather than take the time to study it for ourselves in God's

Word, we consume the information from the world without doing our due diligence in understanding interpretation and application of this principle based in God's Word. **You could spend the next decade studying secular, worldly theories as I did and find subtle principles that correlate to God's Word in all of them, or you could spend the next decade focused on rightly studying and handling God's Word and not have to sift through all the mouse poop that comes with worldly wisdom.** We'd rather read it from the human source rather than hide God's Word in our hearts. Or perhaps this is revealing a lack of discipleship. Or maybe I don't want to make the effort to study and know God's revealed words because I might have to change something I'm doing or begin doing something I'm not. Rather than feast upon Scripture as the holy, authoritative, sufficient Word, we use it to proof-text some concept from the world, and even from well-intentioned Christians. The "Christian" world of influence is filled with mouse-poop cookies.

Are you equipped to know the difference? **Who is your teacher?**

Who is teaching you about God's glory? God's sovereignty? About the human condition? About anger, fear, forgiveness, wisdom? If it's not God's Word, if it's worldly influences and worldly voices, you are eating mouse-poop cookies. Starting next week we will spend three weeks on each of the following topics: a biblical view of anger, fear, forgiveness, and decision-making. We will have a business meeting assembly at the end of October and a wrap-up the last Sunday before the Christmas break. As we go through these topics, we will revisit elements we covered last semester because they are foundational and can't help but impact our view of anger, fear, and so forth. And once again, if you missed last semester, I would encourage you to join us on Wednesday evenings.

Questions?